United Nations A/57/745–S/2003/252

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
5 March 2003

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session
Agenda items 36 and 160

The situation in the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Security Council
Fifty-eighth year

Letter dated 5 March 2003 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to draw your attention to the latest attack in the ongoing campaign of Palestinian terrorism targeted against the citizens of Israel.

Shortly after 2 p.m. (local time) this afternoon, a powerful explosion ripped apart a public bus in the northern Israeli city of Haifa, scattering human remains and debris throughout the area. At present, 15 people are dead and more than 40 others are wounded, a number of them critically. A spokesperson for the terrorist organization Hamas, which operates openly and freely in Palestinian territory, praised the attack and vowed that such acts will continue.

Today's bombing is merely the latest attempt by Palestinian terrorists to target Israeli civilians. Countless terrorist attacks have been prevented in recent weeks by the extraordinary efforts of Israel's security personnel. In the month of February alone, more than 40 attacks were thwarted. In the past week, Israeli soldiers operating in the Al Pavar and Sha-Anur refugee camps discovered large stores of weaponry intended for use in terrorist attacks. And in mid-January, Israeli police intercepted a terrorist en route to carry out a major attack at Teddy Stadium, a large sports complex in Jerusalem capable of holding thousands of spectators. Countless innocent lives, both Israeli and Palestinian, have been spared as a result of these counter-terrorist measures.

The continuing threat of Palestinian terrorism, along with the success of Israeli security forces in preventing scores of attempted attacks, underscore the absolute necessity of Israel's preventive security measures. While Israel has consistently sought to alleviate the difficulties these measures entail for the Palestinian civilian population, this task is made exponentially more difficult by the criminal tactic of terrorist groups that take refuge in civilian areas, including refugee camps, hospitals and schools. This tactic, which must be uniformly condemned, is a grave violation of international humanitarian law that endangers both Israeli and Palestinian

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civilians. If the global campaign against terrorism is to succeed, it must involve adopting a policy of zero tolerance for such horrific tactics, as well as holding accountable those who continue to glorify murderers as martyrs.

Israel continues to hold the Palestinian leadership responsible for the ongoing campaign of terrorism deliberately aimed at Israeli civilians. Rather than fulfilling their obligations under international law, Security Council resolutions, as well as signed commitments reached with Israel, the Palestinian leadership has chosen instead to use its power and influence to support and encourage acts of violence against innocent civilians. Palestinian television, newspapers, public education and religious institutions remain rife with vile anti-Israeli incitement that provides the inspiration, encouragement and moral sanction that underpin terrorist activity.

Israel calls upon the International community to reaffirm its clear and total rejection of terrorist tactics and to use its authority and influence to compel all regimes that sponsor and incite terrorism to fulfil their responsibilities in accordance with international law, signed agreements and Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1373 (2001). Only the total rejection of such tactics, and active measures taken to prevent the commission of such brutal attacks, will lay the groundwork for a return to a peaceful process of negotiations capable of satisfying the needs and aspirations of Palestinians and Israelis alike.

I submit this letter in follow-up to numerous letters detailing the campaign of Palestinian terrorism that began in September 2000, which document the criminal terrorist strategy for which the terrorists and their supporters must be held fully accountable.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 160 and 36, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Arye **Mekel**
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

United Nations A/57/746

General Assembly

Distr.: General
6 March 2003

Original: English

Fifty-seventh session
Agenda item 126
Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

Feasibility of consolidating the accounts of the various peacekeeping operations

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to paragraph 10 of General Assembly resolution 56/293 of 27 June 2002, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report on the feasibility of consolidating the accounts of the different peacekeeping operations, while following the current practice of reporting, budgeting and financing of peacekeeping operations, in accordance with the existing Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations.

The report concludes that the two elements are inconsistent, but explores issues that would need to be addressed prior to the adoption of any decision to consolidate the peacekeeping accounts, as well as other issues related to the financing of peacekeeping operations.

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–4	2
II.	Combination of peacekeeping accounts	5–20	2
	A. Potential benefits	5–6	2
	B. Issues raised by the combination of peacekeeping accounts	7–12	3
	C. Possible approach	13–20	4
III.	Action to be taken by the General Assembly	21	5

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I. Introduction

1. In paragraph 10 of its resolution 56/293 of 27 June 2002, the General Assembly requested the Secretary-General to submit a report to the General Assembly at its fifty-seventh session on the feasibility of consolidating the accounts of the different peacekeeping operations, while following the current practice of reporting, budgeting and financing of peacekeeping operations, in accordance with the existing Financial Regulations and Rules of the United Nations.

2. The term "accounts" is defined as the official records of the income, expenditures, assets and liabilities of each peacekeeping operation. In order to determine how to comply with the provisions of this resolution, a review was first carried out on the compatibility of consolidating peacekeeping accounts while maintaining current practices.

3. The current practice can be summarized as described below. For each operation:

(a) A special account is maintained for the recording of income and expenditure;

(b) A separate budget is prepared and reported on;

(c) A separate resolution is adopted approving the budget and the method of financing;

(d) The timing of assessments is linked to the budget cycle (1 July to 30 June) and to the period of the mandate approved by the Security Council.

4. Clearly, the consolidation of the peacekeeping accounts is not compatible with current financial practices, which treat each peacekeeping mission independently. It is therefore not possible to implement the request within the framework set out in paragraph 10 of the resolution. It may be useful, however, to consider the possible benefits of consolidation and to examine the entire range of issues that would need to be taken into account before any consolidation of the accounts could be implemented.

II. Combination of peacekeeping accounts

A. Potential benefits

5. Consolidating the peacekeeping accounts could provide greater flexibility in utilizing peacekeeping resources. The pooling of accounts would eliminate the need for cross borrowing and could permit more consistent and timely reimbursement to troop-contributing Governments. Under the current practice, it is often necessary to defer payments for troops and contingent-owned equipment for a particular mission because of delays in the payment of assessed contributions for that mission. Furthermore, in its financing resolutions the General Assembly has decided that no peacekeeping mission shall be financed by borrowing funds from other active peacekeeping missions. Prompt payment of amounts owed to troop-contributing countries would, however, still depend on payment of assessed contributions by Member States.

6. Consolidation of the peacekeeping accounts could also streamline the legislative and administrative processes for the financing of peacekeeping operations if the General Assembly were to adopt only one peacekeeping financing

resolution and approve only one assessment on Member States. Possible procedures under such an approach are described in greater detail below.

B. Issues raised by the combination of peacekeeping accounts

7. If the General Assembly were to decide on consolidation, the issues would vary depending on whether all accounts were consolidated and whether this was done retroactively or prospectively. Under financial regulation 3.5, contributions are applied to the oldest outstanding arrears. If all peacekeeping accounts were consolidated retroactively, the outstanding contributions to each operation would be commingled. Under the current financial regulations and rules, payments would be applied to the oldest outstanding debt regardless of the origin of the debt. This would include outstanding contributions to the United Nations Operation in the Congo (ONUC) and the United Nations Emergency Force (UNEF I) which a number of Member States have not paid, and in respect of which the General Assembly has decided that the applicability of Article 19 will not be raised. The Assembly would have to consider the implications of consolidating peacekeeping accounts on the application of Article 19 in this context, as well as in the case of Member States specified in Assembly decision 49/470 of 23 December 1994. This decision excludes the peacekeeping arrears of those Member States arising before 1996 from the calculations for the application of Article 19.

8. If the General Assembly were to decide on the consolidation of peacekeeping accounts prospectively, that is only for future appropriations and assessments, amounts owed for these operations up to the date of consolidation would be mission specific while amounts owed thereafter would not. A mechanism for application of subsequent receipts would need to be developed, and financial regulations and rules might need to be changed.

Active peacekeeping missions

9. Should the General Assembly decide to combine the accounts of active peacekeeping missions only, and to do so prospectively, it would need to consider transitional measures to provide the missions with sufficient cash to cover their operating expenses from the date of consolidation until the receipt of new assessments. It would also be necessary to prioritize the settlement of liabilities since cash resources could be available in the new consolidated account to meet liabilities incurred from the date of consolidation, but may not be available in the separate accounts that would have been maintained for the prior periods.

Closed peacekeeping missions

10. At 30 June 2002 there were 20 closed peacekeeping missions with combined assets of $1,231.0 million and combined liabilities amounting to $462.0 million. The cash position of the 20 missions varied considerably. Twelve missions (UNMOT, MONUA, UNPREDEP, UNTAES, UNOMIL, UNPF, UNMIH, UNAMIR, ONUSAL, UNMLT, UNTAG and UNIIMOG) had sufficient cash to meet all of their respective outstanding liabilities and 8 missions (MIPONUH, MINURCA, MINUGUA, UNUMOZ, UNOSOM, UNTAC, UNEF and ONUC) did not have sufficient cash resources.

11. The status of the 12 closed missions with cash and the 8 closed missions with cash shortfalls is summarized below.

Cash position of closed missions at 30 June 2002

(Thousands of United States dollars)

	Closed missions with cash balances	*Closed missions with cash shortfalls*[a]
Cash balances	454 756	14 823
Less: required for strategic deployment stocks per General Assembly resolution 56/292	(141 546)	-
Less: total liabilities	(127 818)[b]	(206 796)
Net cash balance (shortfall)	**185 392**	**(191 973)**
Add: unpaid contributions	291 052	307 601
Add: other assets	30 493	4 901
Reserves and fund balances	**506 937**	**120 529**

[a] Excludes unrecorded contingent liabilities of approximately $12.5 million in respect of MONUA.

[b] Excludes $127,380,000 in credits in respect of UNPF expenditures that are reimbursable by Member States.

12. It should be noted that although 12 missions have sufficient cash resources to meet all of their respective outstanding liabilities, because of unpaid contributions by some Member States, they do not have sufficient cash to cover the full refund of their fund balances to Member States. In those missions therefore refunds would be limited to available cash. If the cash resources of all 20 missions were to be combined, no cash would be available to refund any of the fund balances to Member States.

C. Possible approach

13. While retroactive consolidation of all peacekeeping accounts may be a desired goal, a phased approach would seem more practical. As a first step, the accounts of the active peacekeeping missions could be consolidated retroactively, with separate accounts maintained for closed missions. These arrangements would ensure that, going forward, Member States and the peacekeeping operations would benefit from more efficient and flexible procedures for the financing of peacekeeping operations while avoiding issues pertaining to closed missions, including those outlined above.

14. The consolidation of accounts would require revision of the procedures presently in place for the appropriation and assessment of resources for peacekeeping operations. The established practice is for the General Assembly to request the Secretary-General to establish a special account for each new peacekeeping operation for the recording of income and expenditure, to approve separate appropriations and assessments and link assessments to the continuation of Security Council mandates. The current treatment of unencumbered balances and other income is to allocate them between Member States, applying each Member's

share to the next assessment, for those that have paid in full to the account, and to outstanding assessed contributions, for those that have not.

15. Under a consolidated account, the General Assembly could adopt a single resolution on the financing of peacekeeping operations, including the support account for peacekeeping operations and the United Nations Logistics Base (UNLB) at Brindisi. The resolution could contain a single amount to be appropriated and assessed on Member States, with each operation constituting a section, as is the case for the regular budget. The extent to which the Secretary-General would have authority to transfer funds between one peacekeeping operation and another peacekeeping operation would need to be defined by the Assembly. Assessments would also be de-linked from the continuation of Security Council mandates and only one peacekeeping assessment on Member States would be made at the beginning of the fiscal period and would cover all peacekeeping operations. This approach would streamline the budget approval process for the United Nations and reduce the number of legislative decisions required as well as the number of assessments. It would also facilitate planning for Member States.

16. Consistent with this approach, the treatment of unencumbered balances, interest and other miscellaneous income could be revised in order to streamline the assessment process further and to align it with that of the regular budget. Rather than apportioning these amounts among Member States and offsetting the shares of Member States whose contributions are paid in full against future assessments and applying the shares of Member States in arrears against their outstanding obligations, the aggregate of these amounts would be offset against the next appropriation for peacekeeping.

17. The initial financing of new peacekeeping operations could be provided in accordance with the provisions contained in sections IV and XI of General Assembly resolution 49/233 A of 23 December 1994 and paragraph 15 of Assembly resolution 56/292.

18. Under this approach, a consolidated summary of the budgetary requirements would serve as the basis for the General Assembly to appropriate funds and decide on the financing of peacekeeping operations. Separate annual budget and performance reports would, however, continue to be prepared for each peacekeeping operation as well as for the support account for peacekeeping operations and UNLB.

19. The financial statements for active missions would report on consolidated expenditures compared to the overall appropriation as well as by missions.

20. Final performance reports and annual updates are now issued for closed missions. If it were decided to consolidate the accounts of the active missions, final performance reports would not be required for these missions since the accounts would be open ended. However, final performance reports would continue to be submitted in respect of the closed missions, for which separate accounts would be maintained.

III. Action to be taken by the General Assembly

21. **The General Assembly may wish to consider the possible approach outlined above and provide guidance to the Secretariat in making detailed proposals in this regard.**

United Nations A/57/747

General Assembly

Distr.: General
13 March 2003

Original: English

Fifty-seventh session
Agenda items 111 and 122
Review of the efficiency of the administrative and financial functioning of the United Nations

Report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Office of Internal Oversight Services

Review of the structure and operations of United Nations information centres

Note by the Secretary-General

1. Pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 48/218 B of 29 July 1994 and 54/244 of 23 December 1999, the Secretary-General has the honour to transmit, for the attention of the General Assembly, the attached report, conveyed to him by the Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services, on the review of the structure and operations of United Nations information centres.

2. The Secretary-General takes note of the findings and concurs with the thrust of the recommendations made in the report, which will serve to streamline and revitalize the operation of information centres by the Department of Public Information and optimize the benefit of the Organization's financial and human resource investment in that activity. The Secretary-General is pleased to note that the Department of Public Information is already taking steps to address the issues highlighted in the report through implementation of the recommendations made by the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

03-28195 (E) 190303

Report of the Office of Internal Oversight Services on the review of the structure and operations of United Nations information centres

Summary

In 1946, the General Assembly, in annex I to its resolution 13 (I), set out the terms of reference for the Department of Public Information and called upon the Department to establish branch offices in order to ensure that people in all parts of the world receive as full information as possible about the United Nations. United Nations information centres are the principal local sources of public information about the United Nations system. The budget for the biennium 2002-2003 of the Department's public information work at the field level amounted to $46.5 million.

Based on its comprehensive audit, the Office of Internal Oversight Services issued a detailed internal audit report to the Department of Public Information on 14 October 2002, which included findings and recommendations on a wide range of issues relating to United Nations information centres. Since the development of a new operating concept for the information centres is an important element of the reform of the Department of Public Information, the management of the Office of Internal Oversight Services and of the Department of Public Information agreed that it would be relevant to submit the highlights of the internal audit report through the Secretary-General to the General Assembly and the Committee on Information.

At the time of the audit, the Office of Internal Oversight Services found it difficult to assess the relevance, impact and effectiveness of United Nations information centres, principally because the tools and data required for measuring and demonstrating the centres' performance and effect were insufficient. Furthermore, mandates, goals and strategies for the United Nations information centre operation had not been re-examined and updated by the Department of Public Information to take into account regional information needs and changing regional and global circumstances.

Until now, United Nations information centres were not required to prepare and submit annual work plans to the Department of Public Information for review and approval. The major tool for evaluating their performance and impact is the monthly report that provides statistics on communications activities of the centres. However, at the time of the audit, only one third of the centres were submitting such reports on a regular basis.

In several instances, the number and level of posts favoured United Nations information centres located in developed countries without adequate explanation or justification, although there are certain established criteria for the equitable allocation of resources, such as those contained in document A/AC.198/2001/5. During 2001, rent and office maintenance costs constituted almost 40 per cent of total non-staff operating costs of the centres. A significant amount of those funds is expended on centres located in the capital cities of developed countries. Some centres are under-resourced, particularly with regard to funds for travel. In certain areas, the lack of travel funds restricted the centres to providing only very limited coverage of the host country or region.

Inconsistent reporting by United Nations information centres precluded a full analysis of the usage of library facilities. However, available data shows a lack of "traffic" in a number of centres. The Office of Internal Oversight Services recommended that all centres immediately establish, with guidance from the Department of Public Information, a reliable database, including a profile of library visitors, and report that data to the Department for analysis to determine the need for maintaining library facilities.

The Office of Internal Oversight Services review highlighted the need for an urgent rethinking of the concept of United Nations information centres in terms of usefulness and continued relevance and for closer assessment of various operational and resource issues. The Department of Public Information needs to update the goals, strategies and objectives of the United Nations information centre operation at the global and regional levels as part of a comprehensive review. United Nations information centres in developing countries require a different managerial approach from those located in developed countries, which have easy public access to the Internet and library facilities. The Department should assess the need for centres in developed countries and review their current number, particularly because those centres are absorbing the bulk of available staff and funding resources.

To address the foregoing issues, the Department of Public Information should immediately undertake an in-depth evaluation of the options available, such as:

- Restructuring United Nations information centres on a region-by-region basis with a view to consolidation, merger or liquidation
- Proposing to integrate more United Nations information centres with local United Nations Development Programme offices
- Studying the feasibility of integrating United Nations information centres with the lead United Nations agency in the host country or region
- Transferring certain responsibilities currently assigned to United Nations information centres in developed countries to civil society partners, such as United Nations Associations, on a case-by-case basis.

The Department of Public Information also needs to review the rationale for resource allocations to United Nations information centres and evaluate options for cost savings by seeking to obtain:

- Funding from Member States in the region through the provision of rent-free premises or a subsidy for rent and maintenance costs, with the establishment of new centres being conditional on such funding
- Savings through cost sharing with other United Nations entities in the host country or region.

Any restructuring exercise arising from the Department's comprehensive review should also focus on rationalizing the number of posts and the levels of heads and staff of the centres.

In the opinion of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the successful implementation of those measures will facilitate the re-allocation of funds to United Nations information centres in locations where they can play a more important role in the Organization's information outreach programmes.

Contents

		Paragraphs	Page
I.	Introduction	1–3	5
II.	Review findings and observations	4–33	6
	A. Securing the continued relevance of United Nations information centres: reassessing their mandates, goals and objectives	4–6	6
	B. Achieving adequate coverage throughout the country or region	7	6
	C. Opportunities for closer cooperation with other United Nations entities	8	7
	D. Charging for services provided to other United Nations entities and cost-sharing	9	7
	E. Need for annual work plans and performance criteria	10–12	7
	F. Reporting United Nations information centre activities to the Department of Public Information	13–14	8
	G. Introduction of criteria for evaluating performance and impact of United Nations information centre activities	15–17	9
	H. Filling posts allocated to the Information Centres Service	18–21	9
	I. Rent and rent-related expenses of United Nations information centre premises	22–23	10
	J. Reviewing the allocation of resources to individual United Nations information centres	24–28	10
	K. The relevance of reference libraries needs to be demonstrated	29	11
	L. Role of National Information Officers	30–32	12
	M. Other matters	33	12
III.	Recommendations	34–65	12

I. Introduction

1. United Nations information centres and the information components of Information Services and United Nations Offices are responsible for promoting greater public understanding and support for the aims and activities of the United Nations and disseminating information on the work of the Organization to worldwide audiences.

2. In 2002, there were 65 United Nations information centres, 62 of which were operational. In addition, there were five Information Services and eight United Nations Offices. The financial and operational aspects of the information activities carried out by those entities are supported and administered by the Information Centres Service. As shown in table 1 below, the budget for the biennium 2002-2003 for the entire operation amounted to $46.5 million, or approximately 30 per cent of the total budget of the Department of Public Information.

Table 1
Resource requirements

Category	*Resources (thousands of US dollars)*		*Established posts*	
	2000-2001	*2002-2003*	*2000-2001*	*2002-2003*
Regular budget				
Information Centres Service	4 631.6	4 598.7	23	23
Field implementation:				
United Nations information centres	33 841.4	33 411.4	263	263
United Nations Information Service: Geneva and Vienna	6 034.7	6 048.4	32	32
United Nations Offices	2 394.2	2 443.7	12	12
Total	**46 901.9**	**46 502.2**	**330**	**330**
Extrabudgetary	1 572.9	1 710.8	-	-

Source: A/56/6, sect. 26.

3. The Office of Internal Oversight Services reviewed the structure and operations of United Nations information centres. The audit was conducted at the offices of the Department of Public Information in New York and supplemented with visits to the centres in Bogotá, Rio de Janeiro, Mexico City, Port-of-Spain and Rome. The review assessed whether the services provided by United Nations information centres adequately implement the Department's legislative mandates in the most cost-effective manner, taking into consideration evolving global and regional information needs. The Office of Internal Oversight Services also examined whether resources are allocated to centres in a rational and equitable manner and whether those resources are used efficiently and accounted for properly. The Office of Internal Oversight Services issued its final audit report to the management of the Department of Public Information on 14 October 2002.

II. Review findings and observations

A. Securing the continued relevance of United Nations information centres: reassessing their mandates, goals and objectives

4. The Office of Internal Oversight Services sought to evaluate the overall relevance and effectiveness of United Nations information centres in today's world. However, thorough evaluation was not always possible because the tools and data needed to measure and demonstrate the performance and impact of the centres were inadequate. Nevertheless, the Office developed sufficient evidence to conclude that an overall public information strategy needs to be formulated and coordinated. The audit showed that at the centre level, the Department of Public Information needs to re-examine the broad mandates, goals and strategies of the operation to consider regional information needs and changing regional and global circumstances.

5. The Office of Internal Oversight Services review highlighted the need for an urgent reassessment of the United Nations information centre concept in terms of impact, usefulness and continued relevance with regard to operational effectiveness and resource allocations. Information centres based in developing countries need to be managed differently from those located in developed countries. Furthermore, the need for centres in developed countries and their current numbers also require urgent reconsideration, particularly since they are absorbing the bulk of available staff and funding resources.

6. The audit also showed that the Department of Public Information needs to assess alternative approaches to the current United Nations information centre operation. For example, in developed countries, that may involve having civil society partners, such as resident United Nations Associations, assume some of the roles and responsibilities currently assigned to information centres. The Department also needs to determine whether centres based in major cities are placing undue emphasis on performing a political reporting role at the expense of other outreach activities. In addition, it should encourage and assist information centres to make better use of non-governmental organizations to assume some of the roles currently mandated to centres. Another option would involve integrating more centres within United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) offices in the host country or region in consultation with the Member States concerned. The Department could also seek to restructure the United Nations information centre operation on a regional basis, which would reduce the number of centres through mergers and closings (see recommendation 1).

B. Achieving adequate coverage throughout the country or region

7. In order to implement legislative mandates adequately, United Nations information centre programme outputs should be disseminated as widely as possible throughout the designated geographical area. However, owing to logistical and financial constraints, it is often difficult for some centres to achieve the same levels of influence and activity as those located in the capital city of the host country, because some of them need to be located in major media capitals. Providing effective coverage within the host country could also be a problem owing to the country's large area and high travel costs. Furthermore, 23 information centres and

three of the Information Service offices are responsible for more than one country. Although the resources needed to operate the United Nations information centre outreach programme are limited, the Office of Internal Oversight Services did not identify any instances where Member States complained about the lack of coverage by existing centres. That raises the question of how relevant United Nations information centres are to some countries (see recommendations 2 and 3).

C. Opportunities for closer cooperation with other United Nations entities

8. The Office of Internal Oversight Services review identified various problems, including overlap and duplication, attributable to having a number of United Nations entities in a country or region. The Office obtained the views of some heads of centre regarding the "United Nations house" concept, which involves having all United Nations entities in a country or region in one location. The heads of centre generally noted that to be successful, that concept required the further development of a sharing, cooperative culture and attitude, as well as good personal relationships among the heads of the various entities. Any initiatives to integrate United Nations activities in a particular location need to be supported by instruments that clearly define and secure the high profile of the United Nations information centre operation (see recommendation 4).

D. Charging for services provided to other United Nations entities and cost-sharing

9. While certain United Nations information centres provide services to other United Nations entities in their regions, there is no policy on charging for those services. In the view of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Department of Public Information should assess whether, and to what extent, the provision of services to other United Nations entities should be part of the centre's mandate. If included in its mandate, the Department should establish a policy setting out the circumstances in which information centres may charge a fee for certain services provided to other entities. Centres could utilize those fees to enhance their activities by, for example, subsidizing travel costs (see recommendation 5).

E. Need for annual work plans and performance criteria

10. United Nations information centres are not required to prepare and submit annual plans to the Department of Public Information for review. The Office of Internal Oversight Services considers the lack of annual plans a serious shortcoming, which in some cases has resulted in the ad hoc coverage of mandates and an imbalance in programme activities. That became evident when the Office reviewed the activities undertaken by United Nations information centres during the period from 1 January 2000 to 30 June 2001.

11. Taking local needs into account, priorities for United Nations information centre activities are left to the discretion of heads of centre and, as a result, there has been an imbalance in the mix of activities, such as media outreach and education, undertaken by information centres. Centres have also been asked to perform

additional duties by other departments, resulting in the delivery of services that lie outside the operation's mandate, such as offering national recruitment examinations and providing logistical support for visiting senior United Nations officials and dignitaries.

12. The Department of Public Information should be more proactive in ensuring that the programme of activities covers all relevant mandates, goals and objectives and request each information centre to prepare an annual plan showing its projected activities and submit it to the Information Centres Service for review. That would enable the Service to:

(a) Verify whether all relevant mandates and the communication priorities of the Organization will be covered and if there is adequate distribution of activities within that coverage;

(b) Ensure that centres develop balanced programmes of activities, taking regional and local considerations into account;

(c) Identify instances where better coordination with the Department of Public Information headquarters or with other United Nations information centres can be achieved;

(d) Identify any constraints, such as insufficient funds for travel, inhibiting United Nations information centres from achieving mandated objectives (see recommendation 6).

F. Reporting United Nations information centre activities to the Department of Public Information

13. United Nations information centres are required to submit monthly activity reports and quarterly overview reports to Department of Public Information headquarters. Details from those reports are entered into a database that records centre activities by means of standard coding of activities and themes. During the 18-month period from 1 January 2000 to 30 June 2001, only 21 centres submitted reports for each month. (In 2002, 48 information centres submitted 10 or more reports.) Furthermore, all 60 reports reviewed by the Office of Internal Oversight Services contained incorrect activity and theme codes. Some centres reported the same activity under two different codes. Although Department of Public Information staff adjusted those exceptions before entering the data, some reports had apparently not been reviewed from the operational standpoint and the details were simply entered into the database. Ten centres submitted all quarterly overview reports in 2001, while in 2002, 13 centres did so. Only one of the five centres visited by the Office had submitted a quarterly overview report after 1999. That raises the question of whether some of those reports or their contents are actually relevant.

14. The Office of Internal Oversight Services noted that the Programme Support Section of the Information Centres Service had issued detailed guidelines on reporting requirements to the heads of centres and other entities through a memorandum dated 8 November 1999. The guidelines were reissued on 26 August 2002. Those centres that are not submitting reports should be reminded to do so (see recommendation 7).

G. Introduction of criteria for evaluating performance and impact of United Nations information centre activities

15. The criteria currently in place to assess the performance of United Nations information centres are insufficient and should be revamped to include stronger elements of impact assessment. The principal tools of the Department of Public Information for monitoring the activities of individual information centres are the monthly activity report, the quarterly overview report, and various ad hoc reports. A review of the activities reported by information centres for a recent 18-month period showed that more should be done to ensure that centres are maximizing the use of their resources and that their activities are sufficiently varied and creative.

16. Establishing specific performance criteria would enable the Department of Public Information to assess the effectiveness of United Nations information centres in providing the best possible service with available resources. Performance criteria should be established for each principal activity used to achieve the goals and objectives of the United Nations information centre operation. The main categories in the monthly activity report, including media outreach, productions, education and public outreach could be used for that purpose.

17. When establishing performance criteria, the Department of Public Information should consider the availability of United Nations information centre human and financial resources and other factors such as geographical location, political environment and the level of economic development of the country or region served (see recommendation 8).

H. Filling posts allocated to the Information Centres Service

18. The budget for the biennium 2002-2003 provides 23 posts for the Information Centres Service: one post at the Principal Officer level and nine other Professional and 13 General Service posts, all funded from the regular budget.

19. The Chief of the Service's Programme Support Section was on sick leave throughout 2001. Furthermore, although four Information Officers were assigned to monitor United Nations information centres, in effect, only two officers were performing that function. The other two officers were assigned to other duties.

20. The Office of Internal Oversight Services also found that Information Officers have not been performing field visits. As a result, there has been little opportunity to monitor United Nations information centre activities closely through:

- Regular, in-depth reviews of quarterly overview reports and monthly activity reports
- Follow-up with United Nations information centres which failed to report on matters requiring corrective action
- Closer contact with heads of centre.

21. Professional staff within the Information Centres Service, particularly the Information Officers, are responsible for ensuring that United Nations information centres operate to their full potential, mandates are properly covered and problems are addressed in a timely manner. The Directors and staff of the five information centres visited by the Office of Internal Oversight Services indicated that the

Service's oversight needed to be improved and stressed the need for the Service to provide written guidelines on activities that should be performed and written feedback on the adequacy of the work undertaken and the reports submitted. Centre personnel also noted that there was an urgent need to fill the position of Chief of the Programme Support Section. In the view of the Office, the posts allocated to the Service need to be utilized more effectively to provide better guidance to information centres. A programme of field visits by Information Officers should also be established (see recommendation 9).

I. Rent and rent-related expenses of United Nations information centre premises

22. Allocations for the rental of information centre premises during 2001 amounted to $1,280,502. The Office of Internal Oversight Services observed that 33 centres operated from rent-free premises and seven others only paid a nominal rental charge. The highest rental charges were incurred by centres located in developed countries. The allocations for the centres in London and Washington, D.C., for example, amounted to $377,242, equivalent to 30 per cent of the total United Nations information centre rent allocation. The Secretary-General also commented on the matter in a report (A/AC.198/2002/2) to the Committee on Information at its twenty-fourth session. He noted that rental and rent-related expenses made up approximately 40 per cent of the operating costs of information centres and that a large portion of those costs were being incurred in the capitals of developed countries.

23. Whenever possible, the Secretary-General reports to the Committee on Information on his appeals to the host Governments of United Nations information centres to provide rent-free or rent-subsidized premises. Those appeals have been made over several years. In the opinion of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, the Department of Public Information, through the Secretary-General, should propose to the relevant Member States that the continued operation of existing United Nations information centres and the opening of new centres are contingent on the host Government providing rent-free or rent-subsidized premises (see recommendation 10).

J. Reviewing the allocation of resources to individual United Nations information centres

24. In March 2001, the Secretary-General submitted to the Committee on Information a report entitled "Equitable disbursement of resources to United Nations information centres" (A/AC.198/2001/5). The report included certain criteria aimed at ensuring a fair allocation of resources among United Nations information centres. However, at the time of the audit, the allocation of resources was still very much skewed towards information centres based in developed countries. The Office of Internal Oversight Services audit tests showed that developed countries also had an advantage with regard to funding for travel, translation and printing. The Office did not see evidence of resource allocations criteria that took into consideration the fact that there are more personal computers offering Internet access to the general public in those countries receiving the bulk of the resources. Other comparative advantages

of developed countries include the presence of United Nations agencies and a more modern and accessible media infrastructure.

25. Overall, the Department of Public Information resource allocations favour a small number of United Nations information centres located in developed countries, which in some instances were not provided with rent-free or rent-subsidized premises or payment for staffing by the Government of the host country (see recommendation 11).

26. Thirty out of the 48 operational United Nations information centres that were not integrated with UNDP were allocated one Professional post and the incumbents of those posts were generally the heads of centre. Eight information centres were headed by D-1s. However, none of the centres located in Central and South America, and Africa had directors at the D-1 level. At the time of the audit, it was not entirely clear what criteria were used to determine the grade levels of individuals heading centres and which centres should be allocated a post at the D-1 level (see recommendation 12).

27. Staff costs constitute a significant component of the information centres' field operations expenditures. Once the centre mandates, goals and objectives have been revised and updated in line with the recommendations made in the present report, the Department of Public Information should review the allocation of staff resources among centres. That exercise should consider such strategic options as the potential for better coordination and rationalization of resources with other United Nations offices in the country or region.

28. At the information centre level, the implementation of the recommendations of the Office of Internal Oversight Services for preparing annual plans, introducing benchmarking and performance monitoring against those plans, will assist the Department of Public Information in determining the optimum centre staffing requirements. That exercise would identify centres where human resources may exceed requirements and others that require additional staff (see recommendation 13).

K. The relevance of reference libraries needs to be demonstrated

29. The majority of people who visit United Nations information centres do so to use the library services. However, not all centres were reporting the number of visits to their libraries. For the period from 1 January 2000 to 30 June 2001, only 48 entities reported the number of library visitors. Moreover, not all of those entities submitted reports for each of the 18 months. The available data shows that, on average, 317 people visited the libraries each month, but there was a wide discrepancy in that average between individual centres. Thirteen centres reported less than 100 visitors per month. In the view of the Office of Internal Oversight Services, each centre should maintain an electronic database of visitors and their profiles (e.g. age, sex, student/occupation, topic of interest). That would help management to monitor the effect that United Nations and United Nations information centre web sites have on the number of visitors and formulate a strategy to increase the number of visitors by, for example, targeting certain sectors of the public (see recommendation 14).

L. Role of National Information Officers

30. National Information Officers play an important role in the efficient operation of United Nations information centres. Apart from the operational aspects of the job itself, the Officers assist in the day-to-day operations and activities of the centre and serve as the director's back-up. In some instances, they administer the centre. At the United Nations Information Centre in Rome, for example, the Officer acted as the officer-in-charge pending the appointment of a new director. In the other four information centres visited, the directors stated that their National Information Officers were doing an effective job and all had connections with the local media, which they used effectively. That was confirmed by our observations and review of pertinent documents.

31. National Information Officers, however, had limited career advancement opportunities. There are two National Information Officer grades, equivalent to the P-1 and P-2 Professional grades. The Officers are not eligible to sit for the G-to-P examination. That has led to resignations, as was the case in two of the United Nations information centres visited by the Office of Internal Oversight Services.

32. In rationalizing the mandate, goals and strategies of the information centre operation, the Department of Public Information should devise ways of retaining highly qualified and experienced National Information Officers and expanding their role. Criteria should be established to allow National Information Officers to serve as the heads of centre. Those criteria could also serve as the basis for creating a new post, equivalent to the P-3 level (see recommendation 15).

M. Other matters

33. In addition to the findings detailed in the preceding paragraphs, the Office of Internal Oversight Services review identified other matters related to United Nations information centre operations, such as strengthening the role of the head of centre, further enhancing multilingualism, improving centre web sites and newsletters and various other issues of an operational or administrative nature. Those findings and the respective recommendations were included in a detailed internal audit report submitted to the management of the Department of Public Information.

III. Recommendations

34. The Office of Internal Oversight Services makes the following key recommendations, which are intended to improve the United Nations information centre programme and to strengthen management controls at the operating level. Management's comments are shown in italics. The recommendation numbers shown in parentheses are internal codes of the Office of Internal Oversight Services taken from the original audit report.

Recommendation 1

35. The Office of Internal Oversight Services recommends that the Department of Public Information:

(a) Undertake an in-depth evaluation of the mandate of the United Nations information centre operation and update relevant goals, objectives and strategies to take into account regional information needs and changing regional and global circumstances;

(b) Assess and apply appropriate measures to achieve the revised goals, objectives and strategies of the United Nations information centre operation (AH2001/43/2/01).

36. ***Implementation status.*** *In his proposals for enhancing public information, contained in the report entitled "Strengthening of the United Nations: an agenda for further change" (A/57/387 and Corr.1), the Secretary-General has assigned the Information Centres Service and the information centres to the Department's new Strategic Communications Division in order to integrate them into the Organization's communications strategy. In the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005, the centres will be part of the new subprogramme 1 (strategic communications services). The Secretary-General has also proposed rationalizing the United Nations information centre network of regional hubs throughout the world over the next three years, starting with the creation of a Western European hub (General Assembly resolution 57/300, para. 15). This proposal is expected to position United Nations information centres to deliver effective and targeted information programmes with the greatest impact.*

Recommendation 2

37. The Office of Internal Oversight Services recommends that, in implementing the measures to achieve the revised goals, objectives and strategies of the United Nations information centre operation as per recommendation 1 above, the Department of Public Information should ensure that adequate resources, including travel funds, are identified and secured (AH2001/43/2/02).

38. ***Implementation status.*** *The Department of Public Information pointed out that the provision of adequate resources to United Nations information centres is a central issue in its current comprehensive review of the Department. As a result of the proposed creation of the Western European information regional hub, the Department will suggest in the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 that some of the resources released be transferred to United Nations information centres in developing countries.*

Recommendation 3

39. The Office of Internal Oversight Services recommends that the Department of Public Information monitor closely the activities of United Nations information centres, particularly those responsible for more that one country, to ensure that activities are being carried out throughout the designated area or region, and identify instances where assistance can be provided to achieve that objective adequately (AH2001/43/2/03).

40. ***Implementation status.*** *The Department of Public Information noted that since the completion of the audit, its Programme Support Section has been strengthened. Furthermore, in line with its new focus on performance management, the Department will be instituting new measures to monitor and assess more effectively the activities of the centres, including those responsible for more than one country.*

Recommendation 4

41. The Office of Internal Oversight Services recommends that, in implementing the measures to achieve the revised goals, objectives and strategies of the United Nations information centre operation as per recommendation 1 above, the Department of Public Information assess opportunities for reducing duplication of activities between United Nations information centres and other United Nations entities in a country or region through integration (AH2001/43/2/04).

42. ***Implementation status.*** *The Department of Public Information indicated that its policy is to ensure that United Nations information centres act as focal points for all United Nations system information activities in the host country. The Department has encouraged the establishment of United Nations country team communications groups to develop local communications strategies and to implement jointly the information activities of the country team. The Department has encouraged and participated in the establishment of United Nations houses where feasible.*

Recommendation 5

43. The Office of Internal Oversight Services recommends that the Department of Public Information:

(a) Assess the nature and extent of services United Nations information centres provide to other United Nations entities in their country or region;

(b) Develop a policy and issue guidelines to United Nations information centre heads on charging for services rendered to other United Nations entities and on sharing costs with such entities (AH2001/43/2/05).

44. ***Implementation status.*** *The Department of Public Information explained that many United Nations information centres have been successful in obtaining the financial support of United Nations agencies in implementing information activities on their behalf. Currently, in accordance with United Nations Secretariat policy whereby all charges are centralized at Headquarters, United Nations information centres cannot charge individual United Nations field offices for services rendered. The Department intends to seek the assistance of the United Nations Controller with a view to establishing a procedure for the reimbursement of services provided by United Nations information centres to United Nations field offices.*

Recommendation 6

45. The Office of Internal Oversight Services recommends that the Department of Public Information:

(a) Require all United Nations information centres to prepare and submit for review and approval an annual plan setting out the activities which they plan to carry out during the forthcoming year in line with their mandates, goals and objectives;

(b) Review the annual plan submitted by each United Nations information centre to ensure that the proposed activities comprehensively cover all mandates in the most cost-effective manner (AH2001/43/2/07 and 08).

46. ***Implementation status.*** *The Department of Public Information indicated that until now, in order to give United Nations information centres the flexibility to adapt*

to changing conditions and work demands, they have been required to submit, as part of their quarterly overview report, a plan of major activities for the next three-month period rather than annual plans. Beginning in 2003, the Department has decided, on a trial basis, to request United Nations information centres to submit annual plans for review by the Information Centres Service.

Recommendation 7

47. The Office of Internal Oversight Services recommends that the Department of Public Information:

(a) Review the current United Nations information centre reporting requirements against operation mandates, objectives and strategies and determine whether any changes are required in report contents and the frequency of reporting;

(b) Once annual plans are requested from United Nations information centres and the performance criteria are in place, implement procedures to ensure that all reports are reviewed, data is analysed against the plan and performance criteria and appropriate feedback is given to heads of United Nations information centres;

(c) Issue guidance and reminders to those United Nations information centres that do not submit reports on time (AH2001/43/2/09).

48. ***Implementation status.*** *The Department of Public Information advised that placing the Information Centres Service in the new Division for Strategic Communications and filling vacant posts in the Service, particularly those of Chief, Information Centres Service, and of Chief, Programme Support Section, will contribute to the implementation of this recommendation. The Department also indicated that the reporting guidelines were being updated and would be sent to all United Nations information centres.*

Recommendation 8

49. The Office of Internal Oversight Services recommends that the Department of Public Information:

(a) Establish performance criteria for assessing the activities of each United Nations information centre in line with the mandates, goals and objectives of the United Nations information centre operation;

(b) Communicate those criteria to heads of United Nations information centres;

(c) Implement measures to monitor the activity of each United Nations information centre against the relative criteria and take immediate corrective actions accordingly (AH2001/43/2/10).

50. ***Implementation status.*** *The Department of Public Information explained that one of the key aspects of the Department's reform effort concerns performance management. The Department has already stated before the Committee on Information at its 2002 session that performance management must be a vital part of all major activities and programmes. While resources for evaluation activities are limited, the Department is taking steps to build systematic evaluation into the work of each departmental unit, including the United Nations information centres. As a first step, key staff have attended several training sessions on evaluation techniques.*

Recommendation 9

51. The Office of Internal Oversight Services recommends that the Department of Public Information:

(a) Take immediate steps to ensure that all approved Information Centres Service posts are filled by appropriately qualified personnel, preferably those with field experience;

(b) Formulate a programme of Information Officer visits to United Nations information centres and include the cost thereof in the next budget (AH2001/43/2/11 and 12).

52. ***Implementation status.*** *The Department of Public Information advised that in November 2002, new Chiefs of the Information Centres Service and the Programme Support Section were appointed. Also, all Information Officers have returned to their duties and the Service was placed under the Strategic Communications Division. A new Chief of the Centres Operations Section is being recruited. The Department explained that, owing to the lack of travel funds, Information Officers had not been performing field visits except in connection with annual and home leave. In one year, those Officers made 20 visits to centres, travelling on their own time and expense. The Department's submission to the proposed programme budget for the biennium 2004-2005 provides for more visits to the field, although travel for the entire Department has been drastically reduced.*

Recommendation 10

53. The Office of Internal Oversight Services recommends that the Department of Public Information, through the Secretary-General, submit a proposal to the General Assembly requesting that the continued operation of United Nations information centres become conditional on the concerned Member States providing rent-free premises or a subsidy for rent and maintenance costs. The establishment of new centres, if any, should also be conditional on such funding (AH2001/43/2/13).

54. ***Implementation status.*** *The Department of Public Information indicated that the Secretary-General has repeatedly appealed to concerned Member States to contribute to United Nations information centre operations in their countries in cash and in kind.*

Recommendation 11

55. The Office of Internal Oversight Services recommends that, on the basis of the updated mandates, goals, objectives and strategies of the United Nations information centre operation, the Department of Public Information:

(a) Establish criteria for allocating funds and posts to United Nations information centres to help them attain the activities set out in their annual plans as per recommendation 3 above;

(b) Reallocate posts and funds on the basis of those criteria (AH2001/43/2/14).

56. ***Implementation status.*** *The Department of Public Information advised that such criteria are outlined in the report of the Secretary-General to the Committee on Information, entitled "Equitable disbursement of resources to United Nations*

information centres" (A/AC.198/2001/5). However, the criteria will be reviewed as part of the implementation of the new operating concept for the information centres.

Recommendation 12

57. The Office of Internal Oversight Services recommends that the Department of Public Information:

(a) Re-examine the mandate of the United Nations information centres and establish criteria for determining the level of the head of centre based on the goals and objectives of the United Nations information centres and the scope, complexity and accountability of the post;

(b) Assess the need for having heads of centres at the D-1 level (AH2001/43/2/15).

58. ***Implementation status.*** *The Department of Public Information advised that the grade of centre Directors will be reviewed as part of the new information centres operating concept.*

Recommendation 13

59. The Office of Internal Oversight Services recommends that, based on the updated mandates, goals, objectives and strategies of the United Nations information centre operation, the Department of Public Information determine the optimum staffing levels of each United Nations information centre taking into account the political, economic and social conditions within the host country, the plan of action of the United Nations information centre and coordination of activities with other United Nations entities within the country or region (AH2001/43/2/16).

60. ***Implementation status.*** *The Department of Public Information indicated that matters such as the allocation of resources are addressed in the proposed new operating concept for United Nations information centres, which would provide for the regionalization of the United Nations information centre network. Following the loss of about 40 per cent of staffing resources in the 1990s, centres are at best properly staffed, although in reality most have experienced cuts often resulting in serious understaffing.*

Recommendation 14

61. The Office of Internal Oversight Services recommends that the Department of Public Information:

(a) Instruct heads of United Nations information centres to maintain an electronic database of visitors to the facilities' library together with a visitor profile;

(b) Issue instructions to heads of United Nations information centres emphasizing the importance of reporting the number of library visitors in the monthly activity report;

(c) Closely monitor those United Nations information centres where the number of visitors is below the expected levels and recommend corrective action (AH2001/43/2/24).

62. ***Implementation status.*** *The Department advised that the issue of United Nations information centre reference services was addressed in the recent review of*

United Nations libraries requested by the General Assembly. The findings and recommendations will be submitted to the General Assembly at its next session.

Recommendation 15

63. The Office of Internal Oversight Services recommends that, in addressing the recommendation to rationalize the mandate, goals and strategies of the United Nations information centre operation, the Department of Public Information:

(a) Set out criteria for highly qualified and experienced National Information Officers to head United Nations information centres;

(b) Request the Office of Human Resources Management of the Secretariat to establish an additional level for the National Information Officer position (AH2001/43/2/18).

64. ***Implementation status.*** *The Department of Public Information advised that the role of National Information Officers is among the issues addressed in the revised concept for United Nations information centres which the Department has proposed to the Secretary-General. The Department intends to recommend to the Office of Human Resources Management the addition of grade C to the two grades currently available in that category in United Nations information centres to expand career development opportunities for the staff concerned. It should also be noted that, under the new staff selection system, senior National Information Officers (NO-B) are eligible to be considered as external candidates for vacancies at the P-3 level.*

65. The Office of Internal Oversight Services will follow up on management's progress in implementing the foregoing recommendations.

(*Signed*) Dileep **Nair**
Under-Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services

United Nations A/57/748–S/2003/288

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
10 March 2003

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session
Agenda items 31, 35, 36 and 77

Security Council
Fifty-eighth year

Elimination of unilateral extraterritorial coercive economic measures as a means of political and economic compulsion

Question of Palestine

The situation in the Middle East

Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Letter dated 6 March 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Upon instructions from my Government and as Chairman of the ninth session of the Islamic Summit Conference, I have the honour to transmit herewith the texts of the communiqué on Iraq and the declaration on Palestine, adopted at the second emergency session of the Islamic Summit, held in Doha, State of Qatar, on 5 March 2003 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 31, 35, 36 and 77, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Nassir Abdulaziz **Al-Nasser**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

03-27485 (E) 180303 180303

Annex to the letter dated 6 March 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

Communiqué on Iraq and Declaration on Palestine adopted at the second emergency session of the Islamic Summit Conference

Doha, Qatar
2 Muharram 1424 A.H. (5 March 2003 A.D.)

Their Majesties, Excellencies and Highnesses the Heads of State and Government of member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) convened their second emergency conference in Doha, Qatar, on Wednesday 2 Muharram 1424 A.H. (5 March 2003 A.D.) at the kind invitation of His Highness Sheikh Hamad Bin Khalifa Al Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar and Chairman of the Ninth Islamic Summit Conference, following contacts and consultations by His Highness with a number of his brothers, the Heads of State and Government of OIC member States.

The Conference considered the general situation in light of the tensions and successive developments and challenges presently faced by the Islamic Ummah, as well as the threats of a possible military attack on Iraq and the current circumstances of the Palestinian cause.

After reviewing the regional and international implications of these issues and the efforts of several parties to contain the crisis and ensure a peaceful outcome, particularly within the scope of the United Nations Security Council, the Conference adopted the following Communiqué and Declaration:

Communiqué on Iraq adopted at the second emergency session of the Islamic Summit Conference

The second emergency session of the Islamic Summit Conference was convened in Doha, Qatar, on 2 Muharram 1424 A.H. (5 March 2003 A.D.).

The Conference considered the grave situation generated by developments in the Iraqi question, the potential escalation of the situation into a military confrontation and the serious repercussions that this could have for the region and the world.

On the basis of the provisions of the Charter of the Organization of the Islamic Conference and its enshrined principles of Islamic solidarity among member States and of the need to respect the sovereignty and territorial integrity of member States, and pursuant to the resolutions adopted at the various sessions of the Islamic Summit Conference and the Islamic Conference of Foreign Ministers, the Conference:

1. Welcomed Iraq's acceptance of United Nations Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) and the cooperation shown by Iraq in facilitating the task of the international inspectors. It invited all States to support Islamic efforts aimed at

averting war and expressed the hope that this cooperation will continue to enable the inspectors to complete their tasks as defined by the resolution. It also welcomed the calls stating that the work of the international inspectors must continue and that time must be allowed for diplomatic and peaceful efforts to resolve this crisis;

2. Expressed its categorical rejection of any strike against Iraq or threat to the security and safety of any Islamic State and emphasized the need to settle the Iraqi question by peaceful means within the framework of the United Nations and in accordance with the relevant resolutions of international legitimacy;

3. Affirmed the need to preserve the security, sovereignty and territorial integrity of Iraq and its neighbouring States;

4. Asserted that the Islamic States will refrain from participating in any military action targeting the security and territorial integrity of Iraq or any other Islamic State;

5. Called on the international community to work towards the elimination of weapons of mass destruction in the Middle East, including Israel, in accordance with Security Council resolution 687 (1991), paragraph 14, and, in this respect, called for an end to the policy of double standards;

6. Rejected any attempt to impose change in the region, interfere in its internal affairs or disregard its interests and just causes;

7. Reiterated its solidarity with the Iraqi people and demanded that the blockade imposed on them be lifted in accordance with international law;

8. Called again on the Republic of Iraq to reaffirm its respect for the independence, sovereignty and security of the State of Kuwait and to ensure its territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders in order to avoid in any way provoking a repetition of the events of 1990. It also called for the adoption of policies that would guarantee these objectives within the framework of goodwill and good-neighbourly relations. In this connection, the Conference stressed the importance of ending media campaigns and negative statements in order to create a positive climate that will reassure the two countries of commitment to the principles of good neighbourliness and non-interference in internal affairs;

9. Expressed support for the renewed activity, as from 8 January 2003, of the technical subcommittee emanating from the Tripartite Commission on the issue of the Kuwaiti prisoners and detainees held since 1990 and 1991. It commended the State of Kuwait's positive response to the information on its missing persons provided by Iraq through the International Committee of the Red Cross and expressed the firm hope that substantial and concrete progress will be made on this issue. The Conference welcomed Iraq's return of a portion of the Kuwaiti archives and called on Iraq to return the remainder of the archives and other property of the State of Kuwait.

Declaration on the grave situation in Palestine adopted at the second emergency session of the Islamic Summit Conference

The kings, presidents and emirs of member States of the Organization of the Islamic Conference held an extraordinary meeting in Doha on 5 March 2003 to consider the extremely grave, difficult and tragic situation in the Palestinian

territories and at Islamic and Christian holy places. They also considered the barbaric crimes committed in Israel's three-year-old war against the Palestinian people, in the course of which it has used all types of weapons, including aircraft, tanks, missiles and warships, killing and injuring thousands and detaining tens of thousands of defenceless Palestinians. Israel is continuing to occupy Palestinian cities and villages and to isolate them from the outside world; to construct hundreds of roadblocks and trenches; to deny Palestinians access to medical supplies and foodstuffs; to destroy Palestinian infrastructure, institutions and establishments, as well as institutes, university and school buildings, places of worship and hospitals; to demolish houses still inhabited by their occupants; to plough up land and destroy crops; and to close border crossing points with a view to humiliating, starving and increasing the sufferings of the Palestinian people.

This brutal, deliberate and planned aggression is framed within Israel's continuing policy of imposing a fait accompli, Judaizing the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and undermining all regional and international efforts designed to end the aggression and to resume the peace process.

The leaders reaffirm the support of the entire Islamic Ummah for the Palestinian people and its legitimate national leadership under its militant President, Yasser Arafat, in efforts to ensure restoration of its rights in accordance with the resolutions of international law; to secure Israel's withdrawal to the borders of 4 June 1967; to establish its independent Palestinian State, with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital; and to secure a just solution to the Palestinian refugee problem in accordance with General Assembly resolution 194 (III). They also reaffirm their continued provision of all forms of political, moral and material support to the Palestinian people in its legitimate struggle against the occupation.

The leaders reaffirm the Islamic position on the question of Al-Quds and its importance for the Islamic world and, in particular, the outcome of the nineteenth session of the Al-Quds Committee, chaired by His Majesty King Mohammed VI, and its support for the position of the State of Palestine on the basis of commitment to sovereignty over Al-Quds Al-Sharif as the capital of the independent State.

The leaders also condemn the Israeli occupation authorities' policy of systematic aggression, as manifested in confiscation of Palestinian land, construction and expansion of settlements thereon, raising of barriers and of an "apartheid wall" and construction of bypass roads. These and all other settlement activities constitute a flagrant violation of United Nations resolutions and international humanitarian law, particularly the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949. They consider that the settlements are illegal, null and void and that they must therefore be dismantled pursuant to Security Council resolution 465 (1980).

The leaders condemn the systematic, massive and wide-scale violations of human rights perpetrated by the Israeli occupation authorities, particularly mass killings and collective punishments such as demolition of homes and sealing of Palestinian areas. These measures constitute State terrorism and crimes against humanity, all being a flagrant violation of international humanitarian law and the right to life of the Palestinian people. The leaders call on the High Contracting Parties to the fourth Geneva Convention of 1949 to meet to consider violations committed by Israel in the occupied Palestinian territories.

They call on the United Nations and the Security Council to assume their responsibility for the preservation of international peace and security by inducing Israel to cease its brutal aggression against the Palestinian people and to provide that people with the necessary international protection as a safeguard against serious violations until it is able to exercise its inalienable national rights in accordance with the resolutions of international legitimacy.

The leaders reaffirm the importance of continued media coverage of developments in the occupied Palestinian territories and of a constant effort to persuade the international media to expose violations of Palestinian human rights, to awaken the world's conscience and to mobilize international solidarity with and sympathy for the Palestinian people in its legitimate national struggle.

They call upon member States to extend urgent financial assistance to the Palestinian authority in order to meet the urgent needs resulting from the continued, escalating Israeli aggression, now in its third consecutive year. This will enable the authority to continue to provide medical and educational services and to assist the hundreds of thousands of unemployed; it will also support the Palestinian people's resistance, help the families of the martyrs, injured and detainees and ensure minimum funding for reconstruction, replanting of land destroyed by the Israeli war machine and repair of roads and infrastructure.

The leaders confirm their endorsement of the Arab Peace Initiative.

Looking forward to a halt to bloodshed and further deterioration in the region, the leaders insist that the international community, and in particular the quartet made up of the United States, the Russian Federation, the European Union and the United Nations, must take prompt action to:

- Stop the Israeli aggression against the Palestinian people and halt the murders, arrests, demolition of homes, destruction of infrastructure and desecration of Islamic and Christian holy places;
- Put an immediate end to all measures of Israeli aggression against the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif and other Palestinian cities, especially the policy of Judaization and settlement; demolition of Palestinians' homes; appropriation of their lands; and changes in the configuration of their cities; and to the policy of isolating the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif from its Palestinian environment and of erecting barricades around it in order to deny Palestinians access to the city and the religious sites therein;
- Induce Israel to stop building an "apartheid wall" which is eating into Palestinian territory, infringing on the rightful borders of the Palestinian State and exacerbating conditions in the region;
- Ensure withdrawal of the Israeli occupation forces, lifting of the internal and external blockade and of all the restrictions imposed on Palestinian cities, villages and camps and the cessation of all inhumane Israeli measures and practices against the Palestinian people, which are in violation of all international conventions and norms;
- Halt all Israeli settlement actions in the occupied Palestinian territories, including the city of Al-Quds Al-Sharif;
- Release all Palestinian detainees in Israeli prisons;

- Ensure international protection for the Palestinian people against the crimes to which it is exposed in the context of the Israeli war of aggression;

- Allow the entry of food and medical supplies to the Palestinian territories and unfreeze the Palestinian Authority funds seized by Israel; and

- Resume negotiations on the basis of their terms of reference, particularly Security Council resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), and of the land-for-peace formula, from the point at which they were halted, following a specific timetable and a political road map based on the relevant Security Council resolutions; the Arab Peace Initiative, which provides for the establishment of an independent Palestinian State with Al-Quds Al-Sharif as its capital on the territories occupied by Israel in 1967; and a just solution to the refugee problem pursuant to the resolutions of international legitimacy, particularly General Assembly resolution 194 (III).

The leaders reaffirm their full solidarity with Syria and Lebanon and their rejection of any threats directed against these two fraternal countries. They also insist on the return of the occupied Syrian Golan, up to the 4 June 1967 borders, and the restoration of Lebanese sovereignty over the remaining occupied Lebanese territories, including the Shab'a farmlands.

United Nations A/57/749–S/2003/289

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
10 March 2003

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session
Agenda items 31, 35, 36 and 77

Security Council
Fifty-eighth year

Elimination of unilateral extraterritorial coercive economic measures as a means of political and economic compulsion

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Report of the Special Committee to Investigate Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People and Other Arabs of the Occupied Territories

Letter dated 6 March 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit to you herewith the text of the statement made by His Highness Sheikh Hamad bin Khalifa Al-Thani, Emir of the State of Qatar, in his capacity as Chairman of the ninth session of the Islamic Summit Conference, at the second emergency session of the Islamic Summit, held in Doha, State of Qatar, on 5 March 2003 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you would have the text of the present letter and its annex circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 31, 35, 36 and 77, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Nassir Abdulaziz **Al-Nasser**
Ambassador
Permanent Representative

03-27363 (E) 130303 140303

Annex to the letter dated 6 March 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Qatar to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

[Original: Arabic]

In the name of God, The Merciful, The Compassionate

Praise be to God and blessings and peace be upon his Prophet, his Kinsfolk and Companions.

Your Majesties and Highnesses,

Your Excellencies,

Your Excellency the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference,

Honourable Audience,

I greet you with the best of greetings, the greeting of Islam. May the peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon you.

It gives me pleasure to welcome you on behalf of the people and Government of the State of Qatar, in your country and among your brothers and kinsfolk.

The extraordinary circumstances witnessed by our Muslim nation at this difficult and complicated juncture made it incumbent upon us to meet in this emergency session to discuss the complex situation facing us, which threatens grave consequences and repercussions for the security and stability of the whole world.

We are meeting at a time when threats are mounting and military escalation is building up towards a regional confrontation whose possible results and effects for the region and the world are difficult to control.

At the same time, the situation in the occupied Palestinian territories is deteriorating incessantly and our Palestinian brethren are being subjected to endless suffering at the hands of the Israeli occupation forces, whose oppressive practices cannot be justified or overlooked.

These situations present major challenges for us. We have to confront them, raising the level of our joint action in order to tackle them and limit their possible negative impacts on our Ummah (nation) and peoples.

We are not here to pretend that we can make an international political or strategic decision which will direct and command the course of these developments. Yet we certainly can influence the course of such a decision and its possible results and effects, provided that we act together, unify our positions, and adhere to our objectives which are dictated by the common priorities and interests and the principles and values that bind us as one Muslim nation. This endeavour to unify our positions and adopt concerted and harmonized policies towards the crucial issues currently facing our nation represents the least we can do. Indeed, it is the least that our responsibilities and duties towards our countries and peoples require us to do.

Today our choice in respect of Iraq is not only between supporting a peaceful political solution or dealing with the outcome of the development of events. In our opinion, it is a matter of what we can do so that Iraq can get out of this crisis in a

way that will spare it and us a costly price or irremediably grave damage, the consequences of which could never be overcome regardless of how good our intentions might be.

In all our actions, we should focus our efforts on exhausting all peaceful means to solve this question out of our conviction that peace is the difficult challenge which our States should take up. Any other outcome would lead to creating more crises, conflicts and sufferings, which would expose the whole region to dangers the extent of which only God knows.

That is why we welcomed Iraq's acceptance of Security Council resolution 1441 (2002) and its cooperation in implementing it. We hope that cooperation will continue, as it is an important step towards a peaceful solution to the present problem.

In this connection, we reaffirm the necessity of maintaining Iraq's independence, unity, territorial integrity and of non-interference in its internal affairs. We also reiterate our firm and principled position regarding the necessity of respecting the sovereignty, its security and territorial integrity of the State of Kuwait and of non-interference in its internal affairs.

Your Majesties and Highnesses,

Your Excellencies,

Your Excellency the Secretary-General,

Honourable Audience,

The Palestinian question is passing through a very difficult and critical phase. We hoped that President Yasser Arafat could attend our meeting. But Israel's continued intransigence and insolence have regrettably made that impossible. The Israeli aggression in the Palestinian territories is still going on, the sieges and killings perpetrated daily against innocent civilians continue despite repeated condemnations and appeals, because of Israel's intransigence, its neglect of its commitments to the international community and its insistence on achieving security and stability through the use of military force, taking advantage of the regional and international conditions to ruin the opportunities for peace.

Allow me to address in utterly, sincere and candid frankness, a message to the pillars of the international community in general and the United States of America in particular, that the continuation of this human tragedy is a stigma in the history of mankind and today's civilization; that security, peace and stability in the region cannot materialize without a peaceful, just and durable settlement based on the implementation of the relevant Security Council resolutions, all of which recognize the right of the Palestinian people to their legitimate national rights, as well as the right to self-determination and to establish their independent State on their national soil, with Jerusalem as its capital, and the necessity of Israeli withdrawal from all territories occupied in 1967. Israel cannot always remain above the resolutions which enshrine international legality and the principles of international law.

Here we stress once again the importance of the resolutions adopted by the Ninth Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference regarding the non-proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and the creation of an area free of such weapons in the Middle East, and we urge the international community to ask Israel

to submit all its nuclear installations to the International Atomic Energy Agency, since that is crucial to establishing a comprehensive and just peace in the region.

Your Majesties and Highnesses,

Your Excellencies,

Your Excellency the Secretary-General of the Organization of the Islamic Conference,

Honourable Audience,

The present juncture requires that we look forward to the future and have the ability to influence it, without looking back to the failures of the past and their bitter memories, so that our future generations can be more fortunate in building a new world in which peace, stability, freedom and equality prevail.

May God bestow success on us and guide us along the path of common good.

May the peace, mercy and blessings of God be upon you.

United Nations A/57/750–S/2003/299

General Assembly
Security Council

Distr.: General
11 March 2003

Original: English

General Assembly
Fifty-seventh session
Agenda items 36 and 160

Security Council
Fifty-eighth year

The situation in the Middle East

Measures to eliminate international terrorism

Letter dated 10 March 2003 from the Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I am writing to draw your attention to the latest attacks in the continuing campaign of Palestinian terrorism directed against the citizens of Israel.

This past Friday evening, 7 March, at approximately 8.40 p.m. (local time), two Palestinian terrorists, disguised as observant Jews and armed with automatic rifles and an explosive belt, infiltrated the community of Kiryat Arba. The first victims were a married couple taking a walk, both of whom were seriously wounded by gunfire. The terrorists then proceeded to a nearby building, where they broke into an apartment and killed Rabbi Eliahu Horowitz, age 52, and his wife Dina, age 50. At this point, a response unit arrived and engaged the terrorists in a gunfight lasting 30 minutes. A total of five other Israelis were wounded in the attack for which the terrorist organization Hamas claimed responsibility.

On Thursday, 6 March, Palestinian terrorists continued their rocket attacks on southern Israeli towns and villages. Three Kassam rockets, fired from Palestinian territory in the northern Gaza Strip, fell in the Negev town of Sderot, an area that has regularly come under rocket attack. On Sunday, 9 March, four more rockets hit Sderot. One of the rockets hit the concrete perimeter wall of a seminary on the outskirts of the town, a few metres from the local fire station. By sheer chance, no major injuries were reported. The terrorist organization Hamas claimed responsibility for these attacks as well.

In addition, Israeli security forces continue to thwart numerous attempted attacks. On Friday evening, Israeli soldiers prevented two Palestinian terrorists from infiltrating the community of Negohot. The terrorists were armed with assault rifles, grenades and an explosive belt, of the type used by suicide bombers. Yesterday, the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) uncovered eight explosive devices of various sizes in the Palestinian village of Al-Yamoun; the explosives were detonated in a controlled manner. The IDF has also uncovered several large laboratories housing vast quantities of explosives.

03-27644 (E) 120303

Israel continues to hold the Palestinian leadership responsible for the ongoing campaign of terrorism deliberately aimed at Israeli civilians, in light of its relentless incitement of its people to acts of violence, its direct support and active encouragement of terrorist acts and its ongoing failure to take any steps to fight terrorism and restore calm. Under international law, Security Council resolutions and signed commitments reached with Israel, the Palestinian leadership has an obligation to fight terrorism, end incitement and bring the perpetrators of terrorist acts to justice, none of which it has done. Instead, the Palestinian leadership has used its power and influence to support and encourage acts of violence and terrorism.

In such a climate, Israel is left with no choice but to exercise its right to self-defence and to take the necessary steps to protect its civilian population from the unrelenting threat of Palestinian terrorism. Israel calls upon the international community to utilize its power and influence to compel the Palestinian leadership to lay the groundwork for a resumption of negotiations by undertaking to fight terrorism, in accordance with its obligations under Security Council resolutions, in particular resolution 1373 (2001). Only the full rejection of terrorism, in both word and deed, will permit the conclusion of a lasting peace agreement, capable of satisfying the legitimate needs and aspirations of both sides.

I submit this letter in follow-up to numerous letters detailing the campaign of Palestinian terrorism that began in September 2000, which document the criminal terrorist strategy for which the terrorists and their supporters must be held fully accountable.

I should be grateful if you would arrange to have the text of this letter circulated as a document of the General Assembly, under agenda items 160 and 36, and of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Dan **Gillerman**
Permanent Representative

United Nations A/57/751

General Assembly

Distr.: General
12 March 2003

Original: English

Fifty-seventh session
Agenda item 126
Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations

Status of the implementation of the strategic deployment stocks

Report of the Secretary-General*

Summary

The present report is submitted pursuant to General Assembly resolution 56/292 of 27 June 2002, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session on the expenses incurred in the implementation of the strategic deployment stocks and on the expeditious liquidation of closed peacekeeping missions and the crediting of Member States following the liquidation of such missions.

The report summarizes the plans developed by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations of the Secretariat to establish the strategic deployment stocks and provides a status report on its implementation by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Management, as well as the progress made on liquidation of closed missions.

The actions to be taken by the General Assembly are set out in paragraph 21 of the present report.

* The present report was delayed in order to ensure that the report included the most up-to-date information.

03-27813 (E) 270303

Contents

		Paragraphs	*Page*
I.	Introduction	1–3	3
II.	Strategic deployment stocks — implementation planning	4–7	3
III.	Status of the implementation of the strategic deployment stocks	8–12	5
IV.	Liquidation of closed missions	13–20	7
V.	Actions to be taken by the General Assembly	21	8

I. Introduction

1. The present report is submitted in accordance with General Assembly resolution 56/292 of 27 June 2002, in which the Assembly requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session on the expenses incurred in the implementation of the strategic deployment stocks (para. 12), and on the expeditious liquidation of closed peacekeeping missions and the crediting of Member States following the liquidation of such missions (para. 18). The Assembly endorsed the concept of the strategic deployment stocks presented in the report of the Secretary-General (A/56/870), and the related recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (A/56/902).

2. The General Assembly approved $141,546,000 to meet the requirements of the strategic deployment stocks. The financing modalities related to this approval were set out in paragraphs 6 to 11 of Assembly resolution 56/292. The actual distribution of income to meet these requirements is shown in table 1 below.

Table 1
(United States dollars)

Source of income	*Amount*
United Nations Peace Forces (UNPF)	54 690 848
United Nations Mission in Haiti (UNMIH)	25 815 321
Interest income from the Peacekeeping Reserve Fund	14 137 444
New assessments	46 902 387
Total	**141 546 000**

3. The first part of the present report summarizes the plans developed by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations to establish the strategic deployment stocks and provides a status report on its implementation by the Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Management. The second part focuses on the progress of liquidation of closed missions.

II. Strategic deployment stocks — implementation planning

4. Following the adoption of General Assembly resolution 56/292, the Office of Mission Support of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations developed a detailed project plan for the phased establishment of these critical stocks at the United Nations Logistics Base (UNLB) at Brindisi, Italy. The first major milestone of this plan was the ability to deploy a headquarters for a traditional mission. The second and third milestones were the ability to deploy a traditional and a complex mission, respectively. The plan took into account the concurrent development of the human resources capacity and the physical infrastructure necessary to receive, inspect and store strategic deployment stocks assets, which is described in greater detail below.

Figure
Key goals in the strategic deployment stocks establishment

5. A phased requisitioning and delivery plan was developed to meet the requirements of the different components of both traditional and complex missions. The Office of Mission Support focused its procurement strategy on the use of systems contracts, where feasible, to ensure continuity, uniformity and ease of replenishment. The plan also recognized the staffing and storage constraints of UNLB. In this regard, as part of its voluntary contribution in kind to the United Nations, the Government of Italy undertook to build three warehouses at UNLB. Construction commenced in January 2003 and is expected to be completed by late 2003. Pending the completion of the three warehouses, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations has identified alternative temporary storage sites at UNLB, including some suitable open storage areas. These arrangements include the temporary storage of equipment in aircraft shelters, soft-wall shelters and sea containers, and the reactivation of the San Pancrazio site to be used principally as hard standing for the vehicle fleet. Due consideration has been given to the proper maintenance and storage of climate-sensitive equipment and the security of strategic deployment stocks assets.

6. The Office of Mission Support has undertaken a detailed analysis of the property management needs to effectively manage strategic deployment stocks assets. The centrepiece of these efforts has been the development of a comprehensive inventory management system to meet the Department's needs. The development of this system is well under way, and will be available for testing in May 2003.

7. In January 2003 the Department conducted a pilot exercise in rapid deployment at UNLB with the participation of staff from existing peacekeeping operations as well as from Headquarters. Two of the key elements of this exercise were the successful validation of the strategic deployment stocks concept in the context of mission start up and the integration of strategic deployment stocks into planning in the Department for rapid deployment.

III. Status of the implementation of the strategic deployment stocks

8. In December 2002, the Department of Peacekeeping Operations achieved the first significant milestone and has positioned sufficient strategic deployment stocks assets at UNLB to rapidly deploy a headquarters for a traditional peacekeeping mission. The Department continues to make considerable progress towards meeting its second goal of being able to deploy the immediate operational capability required for a traditional peacekeeping mission.

9. The current strategic deployment stocks holdings at UNLB exceed $32.5 million in value. In addition to procurement from the resources approved by the General Assembly for acquisition of the strategic deployment stocks, these holdings include equipment transferred from the Department's reserve and surplus stocks from peacekeeping operations which fully conform to the high level of serviceability established for the strategic deployment stocks. Details regarding the transferred equipment are shown in table 2 below.

Table 2

Equipment transferred from the Department of Peacekeeping Operations Reserve and surplus stocks

(Thousands of United States dollars)

Equipment transferred	*From Department of Peacekeeping Operations reserve and start-up kits*	*From other sources* [a]	*Total*
Facilities and infrastructure	838	1 802	2 640
Ground transportation	3 034	6 228	9 262
Communications	543	5 048	5 591
Other equipment	164	1 465	1 629
Miscellaneous supplies	74	1 931	2 005
Total	**4 653**	**16 474**	**21 127**

[a] Transferred from: United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH), United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (UNMISET), United Nations Mission in Sierra Leone (UNAMSIL) and United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (UNMIK).

10. As a precautionary measure, given the lead time required for the purchase of vehicles for strategic deployment stocks, some 200 surplus general purpose four-wheel drive vehicles (three-four years old) are being held in reserve in the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH). These surplus vehicles will exceed their useful life by the time the new systems contracts are in place and will subsequently be disposed of.

11. A summary of the status of procurement actions related to the strategic deployment stocks is provided in table 3 below. At 20 February 2003, out of the total budget of $141,546,000, expenditures and pre-encumbrances amounted to $115,783,000 (82 per cent), including general temporary assistance. The Department projects that the approved resources will be fully utilized. Detailed specifications for some complex equipment in areas such as communications are now being finalized

and will allow the Procurement Division to raise the remaining purchase orders in the coming months. Requirements for temporary assistance amounting to some $1.4 million are being met from projected savings to facilitate the reception, processing and storage of the strategic deployment stocks at UNLB.

Table 3
Procurement status of the strategic deployment stocks at 20 February 2003
(Thousands of United States dollars)

Category	*Pre-encumbrance*	*Obligation*	*Disbursement*	*Total commitments*
Facilities and infrastructure	22 008	15 340	2 829	40 177
Ground transportation	14 570	9 310	1 064	24 944
Communications	25 170	2 018	2 233	29 421
Information technology	6 496	2 300	3 036	11 832
Medical	4 008	-	-	4 008
Miscellaneous supplies and services	2 503	1 801	82	4 386
Total [a]	**74 755**	**30 769**	**9 244**	**114 768**

[a] In addition, $500,000 has been obligated and $515,000 disbursed for general temporary assistance.

The Department projects that the approved resources will be fully utilized. Detailed specifications for some complex equipment in areas such as communications are now being finalized and will allow the Procurement Division to raise the remaining purchase orders in the coming months. Requirements for temporary assistance needed to facilitate the reception, processing and storage of the strategic deployment stocks at UNLB amount to some $1.4 million and are being met from projected savings.

12. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations and the Department of Management will continue to coordinate efforts towards the goal of completing the procurement process for the strategic deployment stocks within the current financial period. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations intends to utilize 100 per cent of the approved resources to establish the strategic deployment stocks. No underexpenditure is foreseen at this stage apart from limited savings from freight costs, which are projected to be lower than budgeted. However, the following potential risks have been identified, which could result in unavoidable underexpenditure at 30 June 2003:

(a) Unforeseen difficulties to find/select contractor(s) for the turnkey project to furnish the three new warehouses at UNLB ($3 million);

(b) Unexpected problems in the selection following technical and commercial evaluation of vendor(s) for the humidity-controlled shelters required for storing 289 vehicles ($3 million).

For this reason, it is proposed that the validity period in respect of the resources approved by the General Assembly in its resolution 56/292 be extended to 30 June 2004.

IV. Liquidation of closed missions

13. The final performance report for a mission cannot be issued until negotiations with troop-contributing countries on amounts owed for contingent-owned equipment, including losses, have been completed, the outstanding liabilities of the mission have been determined and any obligations that are no longer required have been liquidated. It is only after the completion of all of these actions that it is possible to identify amounts that are available for credit back to Member States. It should be noted, however, that as soon as these actions have been completed, the final performance report is issued immediately thereafter.

14. It should also be borne in mind that most of the amounts reported in final performance reports that are eventually credited to Member States result from savings that arise from the cancellation of prior period obligations during the liquidation phase. Additionally, as in the case of UNPF, the United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) and the United Nations Angola Verification Mission (UNAVEM)/United Nations Observer Mission in Angola (MONUA), it is sometimes necessary to request the General Assembly to retain part of the fund balance in order to settle outstanding claims for which no funds had been obligated during the life of the mission.

15. The coordination of mission liquidation requires the participation of Headquarters and field components to develop a realistic liquidation plan and to delineate responsibilities and activities. The Department of Peacekeeping Operations has issued internal guidelines for the coordination of the liquidation process, encompassing the main tasks to be undertaken in the logistics, personnel and financial management areas.

16. In accordance with these guidelines, the liquidation process commences six months prior to the termination of the political mandate of the mission, and continues in the field beyond the termination of the mandate for a period of time dependent on the circumstances of the individual mission. A Liquidation Coordinator is assigned responsibility for the coordination of all liquidation activities and heads the Liquidation Team. The Liquidation Team issues reports on its activities to the Department of Peacekeeping Operations on a weekly basis, by means of which individual areas monitor the progress of the liquidation and disposition of assets and make recommendations accordingly.

17. The responsibilities of the finance area are fully elaborated in the liquidation guidelines. In the past, field personnel were routinely detailed to Headquarters following the termination of the mandate to close the financial accounts. However, the related supporting documentation was often in the field, in storage or in transit, and hence unavailable for reference at Headquarters. Now, however, missions under liquidation maintain the minimum number of finance staff necessary in the mission area to complete such tasks as the sale of assets, payments to mission personnel and vendors, collection of accounts receivable, including security deposits, the closure of local bank accounts and remittance of residual balances to Headquarters, and the expeditious negotiation and settlement of any potential disputes with vendors. Recent experience has indicated that it is cost-effective to complete these tasks in the field.

18. At Headquarters, the Finance Management and Support Service of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations provides guidance to the mission

throughout the liquidation process, and following the closure of the mission in the field, manages the mission's accounts until such time as these are closed and referred to the Accounts Division of the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts. Upon receipt of the mission's accounts, the Finance Management and Support Service focuses its efforts on determining the volume of pending government claims and ensuring that financing is made available in consultation with the Peacekeeping Financing Division of the Office of Programme Planning, Budget and Accounts. The settlement of government claims in the Finance Management and Support Service has been greatly expedited by the introduction of the new methodology for the reimbursement of contingent-owned equipment. Much of the prior uncertainty related to the settlement of claims and the slow closure of missions in liquidation resulted from the lack of precise information on the value of claims troop-contributing countries could bring against the Organization under the old methodology. Under the new methodology, the verification reports submitted by the missions provide an accurate and up-to-date account of the liabilities of the Organization vis-à-vis the troop-contributing countries and facilitate the processing of claims in Headquarters.

19. The liquidation process has been shortened through the provision of improved guidance to missions and the strengthening of the Liquidation Unit at Headquarters. The Unit comprises staff with field mission experience and expertise in final liquidation activities from the perspective of both the field and Headquarters. The liquidation process has been documented, and related standard operating procedures for the liquidation of missions are being prepared. Further improvements are expected as these are fully implemented. Obligations related to government claims may still be outstanding after liquidation activities have ceased, mainly as a result of a cash shortage in some of the closed missions.

20. The liquidation of UNMIH, the United Nations Support Mission in Haiti (UNSMIH)/United Nations Transition Mission in Haiti (UNTMIH)/United Nations Civilian Police Mission in Haiti (MIPONUH), the United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT), the United Nations Preventive Deployment Force (UNPREDEP), the United Nations Transitional Administration for Eastern Slavonia, Baranja and Western Sirmium (UNTAES) and UNPF has been completed. The liquidation of the United Nations Observer Mission in Liberia (UNOMIL) and the United Nations Assistance Mission for Rwanda (UNAMIR) will be completed by the end of March 2003. Final performance reports for UNSMIH/UNTMIH/MIPONUH, UNMIH, UNPREDEP, UNTAES and UNOSOM were submitted to the General Assembly at its fifty-sixth session. Final performance reports for UNAVEM/MONUA, UNAMIR, MINURCA, UNOMIL and UNMOT will be presented to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session. It is anticipated that the Finance Management and Support Service will receive the field accounts for UNMIBH and UNTAET during 2003.

V. Actions to be taken by the General Assembly

21. **The actions to be taken by the General Assembly in respect of the strategic deployment stocks are as follows:**

(a) To take note of the progress made by the Secretariat in the implementation of the strategic deployment stocks;

(b) To extend the validity period of the resources approved in General Assembly resolution 56/292 to 30 June 2004.

United Nations A/57/752

General Assembly

Distr.: General
13 March 2003
English
Original: Spanish

Fifty-seventh session
Agenda item 85 (c)
Sectoral policy questions: preventing and combating corrupt practices and transfer of funds of illicit origin and returning such funds to the countries of origin

Note verbale dated 10 March 2003 from the Permanent Missions of Costa Rica and Peru to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

The Permanent Mission of Peru to the United Nations and the Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the United Nations present their compliments to the Secretary-General of the United Nations and have the honour to transmit herewith the Letter of Understanding between Peru and Costa Rica signed in Lima, Peru, on 9 January 2003 relating the inter-American fight against corruption (see annex).

The Permanent Mission of Peru to the United Nations and the Permanent Mission of Costa Rica to the United Nations would be grateful if the annexed document could be distributed as a document of the General Assembly under agenda item 85 (c).

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Annex to the note verbale dated 10 March 2003 from the Permanent Missions of Costa Rica and Peru to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

Letter of Understanding between Peru and Costa Rica in relation to the inter-American fight against corruption

The Minister for Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Peru and the Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship of the Republic of Costa Rica, having met in Lima on 9 January 2003,

Bearing in mind that their respective Governments fully agree on the necessity of confronting more decisively and firmly the scourge of corruption in all its manifestations in view of the serious economic and moral damage it causes their peoples and the serious threat it poses to their institutions and to efforts to strengthen democracy,

Considering that corruption has reached the level of transnational crime, as indicated in the United Nations Convention against Transnational Organized Crime, since it not only erodes nations politically, economically and morally but undermines confidence in the foundations of international law and transparency in relations between States,

Aware that fighting the scourge of corruption is a challenge for the community of American nations and requires effective mutual cooperation among the States members of the inter-American system,

Convinced that the inter-American legal instruments on the matter should reflect the real commitment by States to eradicate corruption and impunity and the improper use of the immunity allowed under the legislation of some countries in relation to the charge,

Recognizing that inter-American cooperation in combating corruption, which began with the signing of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, is an ongoing, developing process that requires decision-making both on the domestic level and among the States parties to the inter-American system,

Sign the following Letter of Understanding:

First: The Ministers for Foreign Affairs of Peru and Costa Rica expressly state the commitment of their respective Governments not to allow the territories of their countries to be used as a haven for fugitives from justice, particularly those who have committed crimes of corruption to the detriment of their peoples. They also agree to afford one another full assistance and cooperation, with the greatest possible speed and efficacy, in the investigation or prosecution of the acts of corruption referred to in the Inter-American Convention against Corruption, to which both countries are parties.

Second: Both Ministers further agree to support decisively actions undertaken through the follow-up mechanism for the implementation of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption and to promote jointly the adoption in the framework of the inter-American system of the legal and political mechanisms required to apply fully and effectively the principles and provisions of the said inter-American

instrument, including, if necessary, the convening of meetings and conferences at various levels.

Third: It is also agreed that the necessary measures will be taken to promote the earliest possible entry into force of the Inter-American Convention against Corruption in all the States of the hemisphere and the adaptation of the domestic legislation of all States parties to the Convention in order to facilitate its effective implementation and use in preventing, detecting, penalizing and eradicating corruption.

Fourth: The Ministers further affirm the desirability of promoting the adoption of bilateral and multilateral agreements and commitments complementary to the Inter-American Convention against Corruption that would facilitate effective action against the scourge in all its forms and prevent impunity by establishing sanctions against Governments that harbour or provide safe haven for individuals who have evaded legal prosecution on corruption charges of the kinds defined in the said Inter-American Convention.

Fifth: The two Foreign Ministers also agree to promote the establishment of a norm within the inter-American framework prohibiting individuals with a criminal record of corruption from being appointed to offices or posts in international organizations.

Sixth: The Ministers of Peru and Costa Rica express their firm commitment to move forward with bilateral political cooperation and to seek the support of other States and common institutions in promoting consensus on policy within the Organization of American States and mechanisms of regional dialogue with a view to strengthening and enhancing the effectiveness of the fight against corruption in all its manifestations.

Signed in Lima on 9 January 2003.

Minister for Foreign Affairs and Worship
of Costa Rica

Minister for Foreign Affairs
of Peru